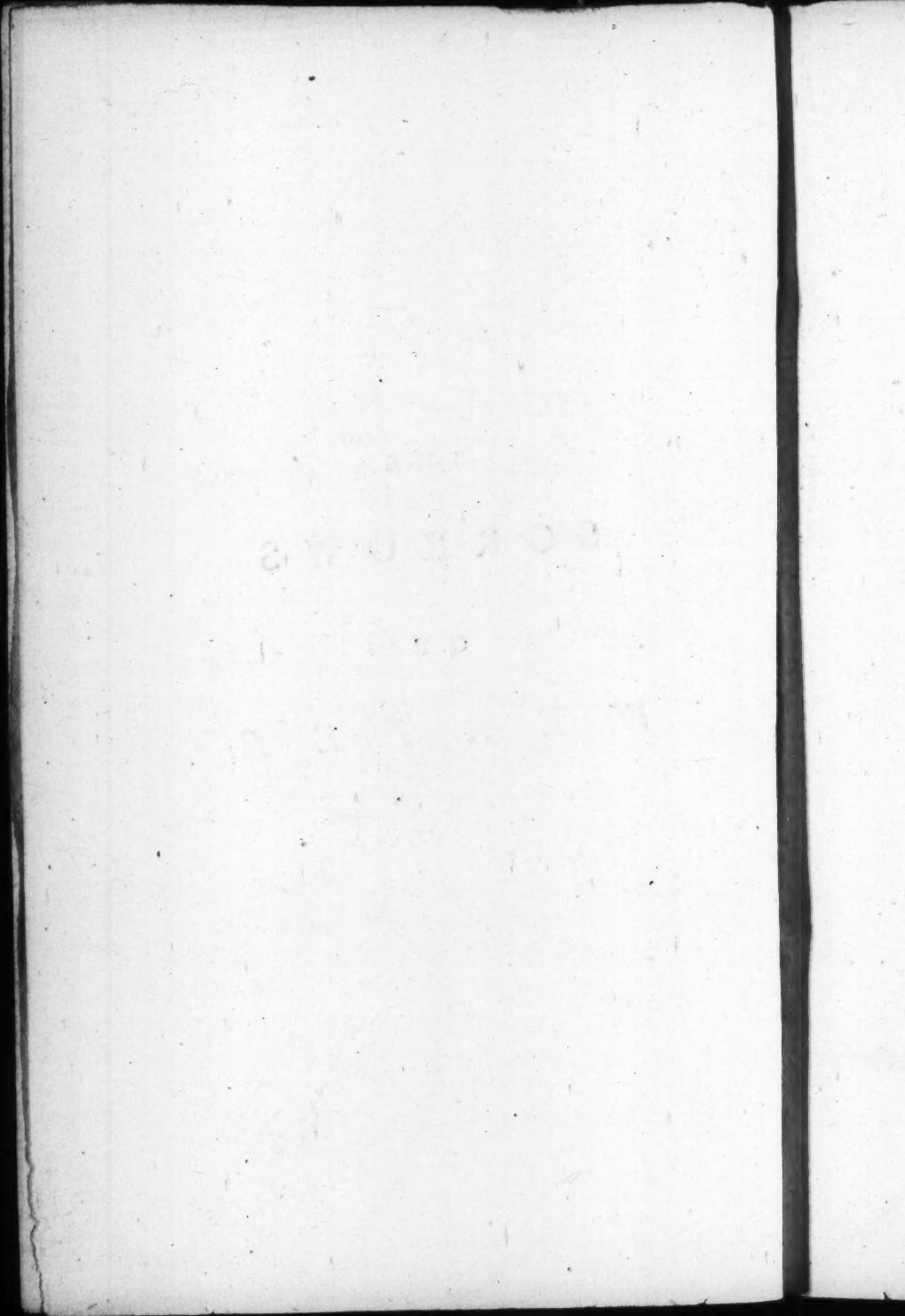


THE
SORROWS
OF
WERTE R.



THE
SORROWS
OF
WERTER.

VOL. I.



Print

THE
SORROWS
OF
WERTER:

A
GERMAN STORY.

—*Tadet cæli convexa tueri.*

A NEW EDITION.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed for T. OSBORNE and S. GRIFFIN.
1795.

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P R E F A C E.

*THOSE who expect a Novel will be disappointed in this work, which contains few characters, and few events ; and the design of which is to exhibit a picture of that disordered state of mind, too common in our country. It is drawn by the masterly hand of Mr Goethe *, and is perhaps little more than the relation of a fact which happened within*

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bis

* Doctor of Civil Law, and author of some dramatic pieces, which are much esteemed.

his knowledge. It went through several editions in German, and soon made its way into France. About two years since, the English translator met with it; and being struck with the uncommon genius and originality of the thoughts, and the energy with which they are expressed, translated some of the letters from the French; and led on by the beauty of the work, which increased in proportion as it was attended to, the whole was insensibly finished; and as no translation from the German has hitherto appeared, it is now offered to the Public.

*Among the number of Pamphlets which this little work gave occasion
to,*

to, there were not wanting some which censured it; and Mr Goethe has been called the apologist of Suicide by those who, not distinguishing the Author from the Work, very absurdly ascribed to him the erroneous sentiments which he has given to his principal character,—a method of criticism which would equally affect all the epic and tragic writers that ever existed.

WERTER appears to have been strongly impressed with sentiments of religion; and it is not to be wondered, that, in his state of mind, they should take an irregular form, and sometimes border upon extravagance. A few ex-

*pressions which had this appearance
have been omitted by the French, and
a few more by the English translator,
as they might possibly give offence in a
work of this nature.*

WERTER,



WERTER, &c.

LETTER I.

May 4.

I AM glad that I went away—
Could I leave you, my companion, my friend, that I might be more at ease? The heart of man is inexplicable. But you forgive me, I know you do. The connections I had formed, were they not sufficient to torment such a disposition as

A 6 mine?

mine? Poor Eleonora! But am I to be blamed for the tenderness which took possession of her heart, whilst I was admiring the beauty of her sister? No! surely I am innocent; yet perhaps not entirely so; I might encourage her affection; and you have seen me pleased, amused with the simple expression of her tenderness *. Many causes might I find of reproach; but I promise you to desist, my dear friend. I will not always be looking back and dwelling on the painful remembrance

* This first object of his affection is supposed to be dead, and has nothing to do with the following story.



brance of the sufferings I have endured ; I will enjoy the present, and forget the past. You are certainly in the right ; that fatal disposition which makes us recal past scenes and past sorrows, greatly adds to the number of the wretched.

Be so good to tell my mother that I am employed about her affairs, and that I shall soon write to give her an account of them. I have seen my aunt : instead of being ill-tempered and malevolent, as she was represented to me, she is the most cheerful agreeable woman you ever saw, and has the best heart in the world. I explained to her my mother's

ther's wrongs with regard to that part of her portion which has been kept back. She told me the motives for her own conduct, and the terms upon which she is very willing to give up the whole, and do more than we have asked. But I will say no more on the subject at present; only assure my mother that every thing will go on well. I find on this occasion, as on many others, that neglect and misunderstandings create more trouble and uneasiness than dishonesty and malice, and they are indeed much more frequent also.

I am very well pleased with my situation here. Solitude in this terrestrial

restrial paradise is a medicine to my mind. The delight of Spring touches my heart, and gives fresh vigour to my soul. Every tree, every bush is full of flowers, and a delicious perfume fills the air. The town itself is disagreeable; but the finest kind of country, and the greatest natural beauties, are in its environs. Upon one of the neighbouring hills, which form a chain, and diversify our landscape, the late Marquis of M. made a garden: it is simple; and at first sight it is easy to perceive that it was not laid out by a gardener, but by a man of taste and feeling for his own enjoyment. I have already given

given some tears to the memory of its departed master, in an arbour that is now almost in ruins, which was his favourite spot, and is at present mine. I shall soon have entire possession of this garden; the gardener is in my interest, and he won't be a loser by it.

LETTER II.

May 10.

MY mind is calm and serene, like the first fine mornings of Spring. Solitude and tranquillity, in a country so suited to a disposition like mine, give me an enjoyment of life

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Life itself is happiness ; and the pleasure of mere existence so entirely absorbs me, that I neglect my talents : I don't draw ; I can't make a stroke with the pencil, and yet I am a greater painter than ever. Thin undulating vapours are spread over the plain ; thick tufted trees defend me from the meridian sun, which only checkers my shade with a few rays. Here, extended on the long grafs, near the fall of a brook, I admire the infinite variety of plants, and grow familiar with all the little insects that surround me, as they skim amongst the flowers, or creep in the grass. Then I feel the divine breath

of

of that all-powerful Being which created us, whose eternal love supports and comforts us. A darkness spreads over my eyes; heaven and earth seem to dwell in my soul, and absorb all its powers, like the idea of a beloved mistress. Oh that I could express, that I could describe these great conceptions with the same warmth, with the same energy, that they are impressed on my soul! but the sublimity of them astonishes and overpowers me.

LET-

LETTER III.

May 12.

FAIRIES and Genii hover over my steps, or the most lively imagination influences my senses and fills my heart. All paradise is before me. Here is a fountain, to which I am attached by a sort of enchantment, like Melusina and her sisters. It is a spring of pure and clear water, which gushes from the rock, in a cave at the bottom of one of the hills; about twenty rough steps lead to it; the high trees which hang over it, the cool refreshing air of the place, every thing is agreeable, interesting, striking.

striking. I never fail to go to it every day, and generally pass an hour there. The young girls come from the town to fetch water from it— innocent and necessary employment, and formerly the occupation of king's daughters. The time of the patriarchs presents itself to my imagination. I see our ancestors concluding treaties and making alliances by the side of fountains, propitious angels bearing witness. Whoever does not enter into these sensations, my dear friend, has never really enjoyed cool repose by the side of a spring, after a long summer's walk.

LET.

LETTER IV.

May 13.

YOU offer me books ; I will have nothing to do with them : for heaven's sake don't send me any. I don't wish to be again guided, heated, agitated. Alas ! my heart is of itself but too much agitated already. I want strains that may lull me ; and Homer furnishes them in abundance. Often have I strove to calm the blood that seemed boiling in my veins ; often have I endeavoured to stop the keen and sudden passions of my heart —— But 'tis not to you that I need

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explain its feelings ; you have often seen with concern my quick transitions from sorrow to immoderate joy, and from soft melancholy to violent and dangerous passions. My heart is like a sick child ; and like a sick child I let it have its way :—But that between ourselves, for I know I should be blamed for it.

LETTER V.

May 15.

I AM already very much known and beloved by all the common people here, particularly the children. At first, when I took notice

of

of them, and spake to them, they answered me rather roughly, and thought I meant to insult them. However, I was not discouraged; but I found the truth of an observation I had often made before----that people of condition keep their inferiors at a great distance, as if they could lose their dignity by coming near them. It is only a school-boy's wantonness, or very poor pretence to wit, which could possibly make any body affect to descend to the same level with their inferiors, in order afterwards to treat them with contempt and ridicule. I know that we are not, nor cannot be all equal; but who-

ever

ever keeps aloof from the people in order to gain respect, I look upon as a coward, who hides himself lest he should not be able to stand before his adversary.

The last time I was at the fountain, I found a young woman on the steps, with her pail standing by her, waiting till somebody came who might help to put it on her head. "Shall I help you, my dear?" I said. "Oh! no! Sir, she answered, colouring." "Make no ceremony," said I; and helped her to lift the pail. She thanked me, and went up the steps.

LETTER VI.

May 17.

I HAVE made many acquaintance here; but I have as yet no society. I don't know what it is in me that can attract the inhabitants of this city; but they seek me, attach themselves to me, and then I am sorry that I can go no farther with them. You ask me what sort of people they are here? Just such, my dear friend, as are to be met with every where else. Men are much the same. The generality are forced to labour the greatest part of their

time, merely to procure nourishment; and the small portion that remains is so irksome to them, that they are contriving every method in their power, to get rid of it. Such is the lot of man!

However, there is a sort of people, very good, and very amiable, with whom I often forget myself, and am dissipated enough to enjoy a great deal of that pleasure which is natural to us. A cheerful meal, a neat table, gaiety with frankness and openness of heart, a walk, a dance, and other little amusements in their company, have a good effect on my disposition: but then it is necessary

that

that I should forget those other qualities in me which lie dormant, useless; and which I am even obliged carefully to conceal from them. Alas! this idea sinks my spirits! and yet, my dear friend, 'tis the fate of all that are like me, not to be understood.

Why have I no longer the friend of my youth? Or why did I ever know her? I might say to myself, "Werter, it is a vain pursuit; thou art seeking what is not to be found!" But I had found it: I did find and know an exalted mind, which raised me beyond myself, and made me all that I am capable of being. All the powers of my soul were extended;

and the deep sentiment which nature engraved on my heart was unfolded. What an intercourse ! Our ideas, our expressions were those of nature ; and the purest affection warmed our hearts : and now—but she was before me in the career ; she is gone, and has left me alone in the world. Her memory will be ever dear to my heart. Oh ! I can never forget the strength of her mind, and the indulgence of her temper.

A few days since I met with Mr V. an agreeable young man, with a very pleasing countenance. He is lately come from the university ; and does not think himself a prodigy, though

he

he may perhaps see his superiority to many that he meets with. Indeed he appears to have applied a good deal, and has acquired much knowledge. Having heard that I understood Greek, and could draw, (two very extraordinary things in this country) he came immediately to see me, and displayed his whole stock of literature, from Batteaux to Wood, and from De Piles to Winkelmann; assured me he had read all the first part of Sultz's Theory, and was in possession of a manuscript of De Heyne's on the Study of the Antique. I forgave him all this.

I am become acquainted too with

a very worthy man, who is steward to the prince : he is free and open in his manner, and loves society. I am told that nothing is more pleasing than to see him surrounded by his family. He has nine children ; and the eldest daughter is much talked of and admired. He gave me an invitation to his house, and I intend going the first opportunity. He is about a league and a half from hence, at a hunting-lodge which the prince gave him leave to inhabit after the loss of his wife : he loved her extremely ; and could not bear to continue in the steward's house, where she died.

I have

I have besides fallen in with some ridiculous people, or rather they have put themselves in my way. Every thing in them is insupportable : but worst of all are their professions of friendship. Adieu. I think this letter must please you ; it is all historical.

LETTER VII.

May 22.

THAT life is but a dream, is the opinion of many ; and it is also mine. When I see the narrow limits which confine the penetrating active genius of man ; when I see, that

that all his powers are wasted to satisfy mere necessities, the only end of which is to prolong a miserable existence: that our seeming care, with regard to certain enquiries, is but a blind resignation; and that we only amuse ourselves with painting brilliant figures and smiling landscapes on the walls of our prison, whilst we see on all sides of us, the boundary which confines us: when I consider these things, my dear friend, I am silent: I examine myself: and what do I find? Alas! more vague desires, presages, and visions, than I find of conviction, truth, and reality: then all is chaos and confu-

fion

sion before my eyes ; and, dreaming like others, I let myself be carried away by the stream.

All wise institutors and learned teachers agree, that children are ignorant of the cause which excites their will. But that the great children, as well as the little ones, should wander upon this earth without knowing whence they came, or whither they go ; without any certain motives for their conduct, but guided, like them, by biscuits, sugar-plums, and rods : this is what nobody is willing to acknowledge ; and yet nothing, I think, can be more evident.

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I foresee what you will say in answer to this ; and I will allow, that the happiest among us are those who, like children, think not of the morrow, amuse themselves with playthings, dress and undress their dolls, watch with great respect before the cupboard where mamma keeps the sweetmeats, and when they get any, eat them directly, and cry for more : These are certainly happy beings. Many also are to be envied, who dignify their paltry employments, sometimes even their passions, with pompous titles ; and who represent themselves to mankind as beings of a superior order, whose occupation

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it is to promote their welfare and glory. But the man who in all humility acknowledges the vanity of all these things ; observes with what pleasure the wealthy citizen transforms his little garden into paradise ; with what patience the poor man bears his burden ; and that all wish equally to behold the sun yet a little longer ; he too may be at peace ; he creates a world of his own, and is happy also because he is a man ; but however limited his sphere, he preserves in his bosom the idea of liberty, with which he feels that he has it in his power to quit his prison.

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LETTER VIII.

May 26.

YOU know my way of choosing a little favourite spot; how I make my arrangements, and settle myself in it. I have found one here which entirely suits me.

About a league from the town is a place called Walheim. It is very agreeably situated on the side of a hill; from one of the paths which lead out of the village, you have a view of the whole country; and there is a good old woman who sells wine, coffee, and tea, there: but

better

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better than all this are two lime-trees before the church, which spread their branches over a little green, surrounded by barns and cottages. I have seen few places more retired and peaceful. I send for a chair and table from the old woman's, and there I drink my coffee, and read Homer. It was by accident that I discovered this place one fine afternoon: all was perfect stillness; every body was in the fields, except a little boy about four years old, who was sitting on the ground, and holding between his knees a child of about six months; he pressed it to his bosom with his little arms, which made

a sort of great chair for it ; and notwithstanding the vivacity which sparkled in his black eyes, he sat perfectly still. Quite delighted with the scene, I sat down on a plough opposite, and had great pleasure in drawing this little picture of brotherly tenderness. I added a bit of the hedge, the barn-door, and some broken cart-wheels, without any order, just as they happened to lie ; and in about an hour I found I had made a drawing of great expression, and very correct design, without having put in any thing of my own. This confirmed me in the resolution I had before made, only to copy

Nature

Nature for the future. Nature is inexhaustible, and alone forms the greatest masters. What is alledged in favour of rules, is nearly the same as what is said in favour of the laws of society. An artist formed upon them, will never produce any thing absolutely bad or disgusting; as a man who obeys the laws, and observes decorum, can never be a decided villain, or a very intolerable neighbour. But yet say what you will of rules, they alter the true features, and the natural expression. You will tell me that they only lop off superfluous branches, and prevent the extravagant. Let us compare

talents to love, my dear friend. Let us suppose a man attached to a young woman, dedicating to her every hour of the day, wearing his health, lavishing his fortune, to convince her each moment that he is entirely devoted to her. Then comes a man of cold and correct understanding; a man who acts perhaps in a public character; and this very respectable person says to him, " My young friend, love is a natural passion, but it should be kept within due bounds: Make a proper division of your time; give some to your mistress, reserve the rest for business; calculate your income, and out

out of the superfluity make presents to her, but that only from time to time, on her birth-day, or such like occasions." If the young man takes this advice, he may be a very useful member of society, extremely serviceable to his prince: but as to his love it is annihilated; and if he is an artist, his genius is fled. Oh! my friend, the torrent of genius would not be so confined in its course; its impetuous waves would rise and astonish us, but that cold and narrow-minded men have taken possession of the two shores; they have built houses and planted gardens on its banks; they tremble for their little

habitations, and dig trenches, and raise dams, to prevent the danger which threatens them.

LETTER IX.

May 27.

I FELL into declamation and families, I find ; and my enthusiasm made me forget to finish my narrative. Quite lost in my ideas of painting, which I unfolded to you at large in my last letter, I sat for two hours upon the plough ; and towards evening a young woman with a basket on her arm came running to the

chil-

children, who had not moved in all that time. " You are a very good boy, Philip ;" she called out. I got up and went towards her, and asked if she was the mother of those pretty children : she answered that she was ; gave the eldest a cake ; took the little one in her arms, and kissed it with a mother's tenderness. " I left the young child with Philip," said she, " while I went to the town with his brother to buy some white bread, some sugar, and an earthen pot to make broth for Jenny to-night ; the boys broke our earthen pot yesterday as they were quarrelling for the meat." I enquired where her other

son was ; and whilst she was telling me that he was driving home two geese, he came skipping up to us, and gave Philip a little ozier twig. I continued talking with the mother, and found she was the schoolmaster's daughter, and that her husband was gone to Holland upon the death of an uncle he had there. " My husband found he should be cheated of the inheritance," said she; " for he wrote, and received no answer to his letters ; and so he went himself. I have not heard of him since he set out. God grant that no harm may have happened to him!" I left this good woman with regret, gave her a

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creutzer to buy white bread for little Jenny when she went next to the town, and a creutzer a-piece to the boys ; and so we parted.

Yes, my dear friend, when I am no longer master of myself, nothing is more calculated to appease the tumult of my senses, than the sight of such a tranquil being. She moves with a happy thoughtlessness in the confined circle of her existence ; day after day passes without disquietude ; and the falling leaves raise no idea, but that of approaching winter.

Since that first evening I have gone very often to the same place :

the children are become familiar with me ; they have a bit of sugar when I drink coffee ; and at night they partake of my whey and bread and butter. On Sunday they regularly receive their creutzer; for if I am not there after evening service, the old woman has orders to make the distribution.

They are quite at their ease with me, tell me all they hear, and their simplicity pleases me much. Their mother used perpetually to be calling out, to tell them they would be troublesome to the gentleman : and it is with great difficulty I have at length

length prevailed upon her to let them alone.

LETTER X.

June 16.

WHY don't I write to you?— Do you pretend to penetration, and ask such a question? You should have guessed that I was well, but that—in a word, I had found a person that is still nearer to my heart —that I had found—I know not what I have found.

Regularly to give you an account how I learnt to distinguish the most amiable women, would be difficult.

I am contented, happy ; and consequently a bad historian.

I must not call her an angel : that you will tell me every body says of the woman he loves : and yet I cannot describe to you how perfect she is, nor why she is so perfect ; she has captivated all my senses,

So much simplicity, with such an understanding ; so mild, and yet so animated ; a mind so placid and a life so active. But all these are only the common-place phrases of abstract ideas, and don't express a single character or feature. Some other time —but it must be now or never. For between ourselves, I have,

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since I began my letter, been several times going to throw down my pen and fly to her : I made a vow not to go thither this morning ; and I run every moment to the window to see if the sun is still high.

I was not able to hold out : I went there : I am now returned ; and whilst I am eating my bread and butter, will write to you my dear friend. Nothing can be more touching than to see her in the midst of her little family. But if I go on in this manner, you will know no more at the end of my letter than you do at the beginning. Be all attention then : for I shall

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endeavour to give some method and order to my relation, and enter into a great many details.

I wrote you word some time ago, that I had made an acquaintance with Mr J. the prince's steward ; and that he had invited me to go and see him in his retirement, or rather in his little kingdom. I neglected going, however ; and perhaps should never have gone, if chance had not discovered to me the hidden treasure which it contained.

Some of our young men propos'd a little dance in the country, in which I very readily joined. I chose a good pretty girl for my partner,

and

and rather agreeable too, but nothing very striking ; and it was agreed that I should take a coach, and with my partner and her aunt should call upon Charlotte, and carry her to the ball. " You will see a very charming girl," said the young lady, when we come into the avenue which leads to the hunting lodge. " And take care you don't fall in love with her," added her aunt. " Why ?" said I. " Because she is already engaged to a very worthy man," she replied, " who is now gone to settle his affairs upon the death of his father, and solicit a very lucrative employment." This intelligence

ligence appeared a matter of great indifference to me. When we arrived at the gate, the sun was sunk near the tops of the mountains, the air was heavy, and low black clouds seemed to be gathering in the horizon. The women began to be apprehensive, and I foresaw myself a great probability of our party being interrupted; but, in order to give them comfort, I put on a very sagacious look, and assured them the weather would be fine.

I got out of the coach. A maid came down and desired us to wait one minute for her mistress. I crossed the court, went up stairs, and as I entered the apartment, I saw six children,

children, the eldest of which was but eleven years old, all jumping round a young woman, very elegantly shaped, and dressed in a plain white gown with pink ribbands. She had a brown loaf in her hand, and was cutting slices of bread and butter, which she distributed in a graceful and affectionate manner to the children, according to their age and appetite. Each held up its little hands all the time the slice was cutting, thanked Charlotte when he received it, and then ran to the door to see the company, and look at the coach which was come to fetch her. "I beg pardon," she said, "for having given you the trouble to come

up,

up, and am sorry to make the ladies wait ; but dressing, and some family business, made me forget to give my children their little meal, and they don't like to receive it from any body else." I muttered something, I don't know what——my whole soul was taken up with her air, her voice, her manner ; and before I could recover myself, she ran into her room for her gloves and fan. Whilst she was gone, the little ones eyed me askance. I went up to the youngest, who has a most pleasing countenance : he drew back, and Charlotte, just then coming in, said, " Lewis, shake hands with your cousin." The little

fellow

fellow held out his hand very ready, and I gave him a kiss. "My cousin," said I to the amiable Charlotte, as I handed her down, "do you think I deserve the happiness of being related to you?" She archly replied, "Oh! I have such a number of cousins, I should be sorry you were the most undeserving of the whole set." When Charlotte took leave of them she desired Sophy, who was the eldest of those left at home, to take great care of the children, and to go to her papa when he returned from walking. She told the little ones to mind their sister Sophy as much as if it was

herself;

herself; and some promised faithfully that they would; but a little fair girl, of six years old, looked rather discontented, and said, "but she an't Charlotte though for all that, and, Charlotte, we love you best." During this time the two eldest boys had got up behind the coach, and at my request she gave them leave to go to the end of the wood, upon condition that they would sit very still, and hold fast.

We had but just seated ourselves in the carriage, talked about the new fashions and the little hats, and the company we were to meet at the ball, when Charlotte stopped the coach,

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coach, and made her brothers get down. They would kiss her hand again before they went: the eldest showed all the tender attention of a boy of fifteen, and the youngest a great deal of warmth and affection. She desired them again to give her love to the children, and we drove on.

The old lady asked her if she had read the book she last sent to her. "I cannot say I have," said Charlotte, "and will return it to you. I confess I was not pleased with that any more than with the first which you sent me." Imagine my surprise, when having asked the title, she told

me

me it was —. Penetration and judgment appeared in every thing she said; each expression seemed to light up her features with new charms and new rays of genius, which were unfolded by degrees as she found herself understood.

"When I was very young," she added, "I loved romances better than any thing in the world. Nothing could equal my delight, when I got into a corner on a holiday, and entered with my whole heart and soul into all the joy and sorrow of a Miss Jenny. I confess that sort of reading has still some charms for me; but as I don't read much, the books

I do

I do read should be suited to my taste. I prefer the authors who don't carry me to scenes too far removed from my own situation in life, but where I may suppose myself and those that are about me ; and whose stories are interesting, touching, like the life I lead in the bosom of my family ; which, without being absolutely paradise, is a continual source of satisfaction and delight." I endeavoured to conceal the emotion which these last words occasioned ; and did not last long, for after she had given her opinion of the Vicar of Wakefield, &c. &c. with equal justice and discernment,

I could

I could hold no longer ; and I began with great eagerness to tell her what were my own thoughts on the subjects. After some time, when Charlotte at length addressed herself to the other two ladies, I just perceived that they were still in the coach. The old lady looked at me several times with an air of raillery, which however I did not at all mind.

We then talked of dancing. " If it is a fault to love dancing," said she, " I will freely own that I am extremely guilty ; no amusement is more agreeable to me. If any thing disturbs me I go to my harpsichord, play some of the lively airs I have
danced

danced to, and all is forgotten." You know me, and will figure to yourself my countenance whilst she was speaking—my looks stedfastly fixed upon her fine black eyes: my very soul attached to hers, and seizing her ideas so strongly, that I hardly heard the words which expressed them. At length I got out of the coach like one that dreams, and I found myself in the assembly-room, without knowing how I came there.

They began with minuets. I took out one lady after another, and exactly those who were the most disagreeable could not bring themselves

D to

to leave off. Charlotte and her partner began an English country-dance. Imagine my delight when they came to do the figure with us. You should see Charlotte : she seems to dance with all her heart and soul, and as if she was born for nothing else ; her figure is all elegance, lightness, and grace. I asked her to dance the second country dance with me ; she was engaged, but promised herself to me for the third ; telling me at the same time, with the most agreeable freedom, that she was very fond of allemandes. "It is the custom here," said she, "for every couple to dance the allemandes together ;

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gether; but my partner will be delighted if I save him the trouble, for he does the walse very ill: I observe the lady you dance with is in the same situation, I am sure by your English country-dances that you must do the walse very well yourself; so that if it is agreeable to you to dance the allemandes with me, do you propose it to my partner; I will propose it to your's." We went to settle this affair; and it was agreed, that during the allemandes Charlotte's partner should attend upon mine.

We began; and at first amused ourselves with making every possible turn with our arms. How grace-

D 2 ful

ful and animated all her motions! When the walse commenced, all the couples, which were hurling round, at first jostled against each other. We very judiciously kept aloof till the awkward and clumsy had withdrawn: then we joined in, there were but two couples left. I never in my life was so active; I was more than mortal. To hold in my arms the most lovely of women, to fly with her like the wind, and lose sight of every other object!—But I own to you I then determined, that the woman I loved, and to whom I had pretensions, should never do the

walse

walſe with any other man.—You will understand this.

We took a few turns in the room to recover our breath; and then Charlotte fat down, and I brought her a few ſlices of lemon, all indeed that were left, which I ſtole from thoſe who were making the negus: ſhe eat ſome with sugar, and ſeemed to be reſrehed by them: but I was obliged in politeness to offer them to the lady who fat next Charlotte, and ſhe very injudiciously took ſome.

We were the ſecond couple in the third country dance. As we were going down (and heaven knows with what ecftasy I looked at her arms,

D 3 and

and her eyes, which bore the impression of a natural and lively pleasure), a lady of a certain age, whose agreeable countenance had struck me at first sight, looked at Charlotte, and smiled; then held up her finger in a threatening attitude, and in a very significant tone of voice said, "Albert! Albert!"

"Who is this Albert?" said I to Charlotte, "if it is not impertinent." She was going to answer, when we were obliged to separate for hands six round at bottom; and in crossing over I thought I perceived that she looked pensive. "Why should I conceal it from you?

you? said she, when she gave me her hand to lead out of sides; Albert is a worthy man to whom I am engaged." I had been told this before by the ladies in the coach, but I had not then seen Charlotte; I did not know her value. I seemed to hear it for the first time. I was distressed, confused, wrong in the figure, and put every body out; and Charlotte, by pushing one and pulling another, with great difficulty set us right again.

Whilst we were dancing, the lightning which had for some time been seen in the horizon, and which I had declared to be only summer-lightning

lightning, and proceeding entirely from heat, became much more violent, and the thunder was heard through all the noise of the fiddles. Three ladies run out of the set; their partners followed; the confusion became general; and the music stopped. When any distress or terror comes upon us in a scene of amusement, it has a stronger effect on our minds, either because the contrast makes us feel it more keenly: or rather, perhaps, because our senses being open to impressions of all kinds, the shock is more forcibly and quickly perceived. This circumstance may account in some mea-

sure

sure for the extraordinary contortions and shrieks of the ladies. One of the most courageous sat down with her back to the window, and stopped her ears ; another knelt down before her, and hid her face in her lap ; a third shoved herself between them, and embraced her little sister, shedding at the same time a torrent of tears : some insisted upon going home ; others, still more distressed, did not attend to their indiscreet partners, who were stealing from their lips those sighs that were addressed to heaven. Some of the gentlemen went down stairs to drink a bottle quietly ; and the rest of the company

company very willingly followed the mistress of the house, who had the good sense to conduct us to a room darkened by close window-shutters. As soon as we came into it, Charlotte drew the chairs round, made us sit down in a ring, and was eager to begin some little play.

More than one of our belles drew up and looked prim, in hopes of some agreeable consequences from the forfeits. "Let us play at counting," said Charlotte. "Observe, I am to go from right to left; you are to count one after the other as you sit, and count fast: whoever stops or mistakes is to have a box

on

on the ear, and so on till we have counted to a thousand." It was pleasant to see her go round with her hand up. "One," says the first, "two," the second; "three," the third; and so on, till Charlotte went faster and faster. One then mistook; instantly a box on the ear: the next laughed instead of saying the following number—another box on the ear; and still faster and faster. I had two for my share; and fancied they were harder than the rest, and was much delighted.  General confusion and laughter put an end to the play long before we got to a thousand. The storm ceased; the company

pany formed into little parties; Charlotte returned to the assembly room, and I followed her. As we were going, she said, "The blows I inflicted made them forget their apprehensions: I myself was as much afraid as any body; but by affecting courage to keep up the spirits of the company, I really lost my fears." We went to the window, and still heard the thunder at a distance; a soft rain watered the fields, and filled the air with the most delightful and refreshing smells. Leaning upon her arm, Charlotte fixed her eyes on the country before us; then raised them to heaven,

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VOL. I.

and then turned them upon me, they were wet; she put her hand upon mine, and said, “ * Klopstock ! I was oppressed with the sensations I then felt ; I sunk under the weight of them : I bent down upon her hand, and wetted it with my tears ; as I raised myself, I looked stedfastly in her face. Divine Klopstock ! why didst thou not see thy apotheosis in those eyes ? And thy name so often profaned, why is it ever pronounced by any voice but Charlotte’s ?

* A celebrated German poet, author of the Messiah.

LETTER XII.

June 19.

I FORGET where I broke off my narration; I recollect nothing about it: all I know is, that it was two in the morning when I went to bed; and if I could have talked to you instead of writing to you, I should certainly have kept you till day-light.

I believe I did not tell you what passed in our return from the ball; and to-day I have not time neither. There was a beautiful sun-rising; the whole country was refreshed, and

the

the rain fell drop by drop from the trees in the forest.

Our companions were asleep : Charlotte asked me if I did not wish to sleep too ! And desired I would not make any ceremony on her account. Looking stedfastly at her, I answered, " As long as those eyes continue open, I cannot close mine."

We both remained awake till we came to her door : the maid opened it softly, and answered to Charlotte's enquiries, that every body was well, and still in bed. I left her, promising to see her again in the course of the day. I kept my word ; and since that time, sun,

moon, stars, may rise and set as they will; I know not whether it is day, or whether it is night; the whole world is now nothing to me.

LETTER XIII.

MY days are as happy as those which are reserved for the Elect; and whatever may be my fate hereafter, I will never say that I have not tasted happiness, and the purest happiness of life. You know Walheim; I am now entirely settled there: There I am but half a league from Charlotte; there I enjoy myself,

self, and all the pleasure that a mortal is capable of. When I chose Walheim for the end of my walks, I little thought that all heaven was so near it. How many times, in my long rambles, have I seen this hunting lodge, which now contains the object of all my vows ! sometimes from the top of the hill, sometimes from the meadow on the opposite side of the river.

I have often reflected on the desire men have to extend themselves, and to make new discoveries ; and upon that secret impulse, which afterwards inclines them to return to their circle, to conform to the laws

rise, gather my own pease, and sit
in a corner to shell them, and read
Homer; when I go into the little
kitchen and make a soup of them,
I figure to myself the illustrious lo-
vers of Penelope killing and dressing
their own meat. All descriptions of
the patriarchal life give me the most
calm and agreeable ideas; and now,
thank Heaven, I can compare to it
the life I lead myself. Happy it is
for me that my heart is capable of
feeling the same simple and innocent
pleasure as the peasant, who sees on
his table the cabbage he has raised
with his own hand; and who not
only enjoys his meal, but remem-

bers

vers also with delight the fine morning in which he planted it, the soft evenings in which he watered it, and the pleasure he had in seeing it grow and flourish.

LETTER XIV.

THE day before yesterday the physician came from the town to make a visit at the steward's. He found me upon the floor, playing with Charlotte's children; we were tickling one another, and romping, and making a great noise. The doctor is very formal and very solemn, adjusts the plaits of his ruffles whilst

he is discoursing with you, and draws his chitterling up to his chin. He thought this conduct of mine very much beneath the dignity of man: I perceived it by his countenance, but I nevertheless continued to rebuild the houses of cards which the children had blown down. He told every body when he went back, that the steward's children were spoilt enough before, but that now Werter entirely ruined them.

Nothing touches me more than children, my dear friend, when I consider them, and observe in the little beings the seeds of all those virtues and qualities which will one

day

day be so necessary to them; when I see in the obstinate all the future firmness and constancy of a great and noble character; in the capricious, that levity and gaiety of temper which will make them lightly pass over the dangers and sorrows of life; and when I see them all openness and simplicity, then I call to mind the divine words of our Teacher, "If you do not become like one of these—." And these children, who are our equals, and whom we ought to look upon as our models, we treat them as subjects; they are to have no will of their own—Have we then none ourselves?

and whence comes this exclusive right? It is because we are older and more experienced? Great God! from the height of thy glory thou beholdest great children and little children (there are no other), and thou hast long since declared to which thou givest the preference? But it has also been long since declared, that they believe in him, and do not hear him; and their children are after their own image, &c.

Adieu, my dear friend: I will not bewilder myself upon this subject any longer.

LET.

LETTER XV.

July 1.

CHARLOTTE will spend some time in the town: she is with a very deserving woman, who has been given over by her physicians, and who wished to have Charlotte with her in her last moments. What consolations she is capable of giving to the sick, I have myself experienced, for my heart is much diseased. I went with her last week to see the vicar of S—: a small village in the mountains, about a league from hence. We got there about four o'clock: Charlotte's little sister

went

went with us. When we came into the court, which is shaded by two fine walnut trees, the good old man was sitting upon his bench. At sight of Charlotte, he forgot his old age and his oaken stick, and ventured to walk towards her. She ran to him, and made him sit down again, sat down by him, presented a thousand compliments to him from her father, and played with the youngest of his children, the amusement of his old age, though it was rather dirty and disagreeable. I wish you could have seen her attention to this good old man; I wish you could have heard her raising her voice,

because

because he is a little deaf, and telling him of young and healthy people who had died when it least could have been expected; commending the virtues of the Carelftad waters, and approving his intention of going thither the next summer; and assuring him she thought he looked better than he did the last time she saw him. During this time I paid my compliments and talked to his wife. The old man seemed quite in spirits: and as I could not help admiring the beauty of his walnut trees, which formed such an agreeable shade over our heads, he began to give us the history of them: "As to the oldest,"

said

said he, "we don't know who planted it; some say one clergyman, and some say another: as to the youngest it is exactly the age of my wife; it will be fifty years old next October; her father planted it in the morning, and towards evening she came into the world. My wife's father was my predecessor here, and I cannot express to you how fond he was of this tree; it is certainly not less dear to me. Upon a log of wood, under this same tree, my wife was sitting and knitting when I came into this court the first time, five and twenty years ago." Charlotte enquired after his daughter; he said

she

she was gone with Mr Smith into the meadows to see hay-making. He then resumed his history, and told us how he got into the good graces of his predecessor, and of his daughter: how he became first his curate, and then his successor; and he had scarcely finished his story, when his daughter returned with Mr S. and affectionately saluted Charlotte. She has a clear brown complexion, is well made, lively, and a sensible worthy man might pass his time very happily with her in the country. Her lover, for such Mr Smith immediately appeared to be, has an agreeable person; but
was

was very reserved, and would not join in the conversation, notwithstanding all the endeavours of Charlotte for that purpose. I was uneasy at it, because I perceived by his countenance that it was not for want of talents, but from caprice and ill humour. It was but too evident afterwards, when we went to take a walk; for whilst I was talking and laughing with the vicar's daughter, the countenance of this gentleman, which before was none of the pleasantest, became so dark and angry, that Charlotte pulled me by the sleeve, to make me desist. Nothing concerns me more than

than to see men torment one another; particularly when in the flower of their age, in the very season of pleasure, they waste their few short days of sunshine in quarrels and disputes, and only feel their error when it is too late to repair it. This dwelt upon my mind; and during our collation, the conversation turning upon the happiness and misery of this life, I could not help taking that opportunity to inveigh bitterly against ill humour. "We are apt" said I, "to complain that we have but few happy days; and it appears to me that we have very little right to complain. If our hearts were

al-

always in a proper disposition to receive the good things which Heaven sends us, we should acquire strength to support the evil when they came upon us." "But," says the vicar's wife, "we cannot always command our tempers; so much depends on the constitution; when the body is ill at ease, the mind is so likewise." "Well, let us look upon this disposition as a disease," I answered, "and see if there is no remedy for it." "That is more to the purpose," said Charlotte; and I think, indeed, a great deal might be done in this respect. I know, for example, that when any thing disturbs my temper,

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temper, I go into the garden, I sing a lively air, and it vanishes." "This is what I meant," I replied; "ill-humour may be compared to sloth. It is natural to man to be indolent; but if once we get the better of our indolence, we then go on with alacrity, and find a real pleasure in being active." The daughter listened to me with attention. The young man objected, that we were not masters of ourselves, and still less of our feelings. I told him, that it was a disagreeable sensation which was in question, and one that every body wished to get rid of; that we don't know how far our strength

strength will go till we have tried it ; that the sick consult physicians, and submit to the most scrupulous regimen, and the most nauseous medicines, to recover their health. I then perceived that the good old man inclined his head to listen to our discourse. I therefore raised my voice ; and addressing myself to him, said, " There has been a great deal of preaching against all crimes, Sir; but I don't know that any body has hitherto preached against the spleen." " It is for those who preach in towns," said he, " to discourse on that subject, for peasants don't know what the spleen is ; tho' indeed it

would

would not be amis to do it here from time to time, if it was only for my wife and the steward." We all laughed, and so did he very heartily; but it gave him a fit of coughing, which interrupted us for some time. Mr Smith resumed the subject. " You have made this indisposition of temper a crime," said he; " That appears to me to be carrying the matter too far." " It is not, though," I answered, " if what is pernicious to ourselves, and to others, deserves the name of crime. Is it not enough that we are without the power to make one another happy, but must we deprive each other

of

of that satisfaction, which, left to ourselves, we might often be capable of enjoying? Show me the man who has ill-humour, and who hides it; who bears the whole burden of it himself, without interrupting the pleasures of those about him! No; ill-humour arises from a consciousness of our own want of merit; from a discontent which always accompanies that envy which foolish vanity engenders. We dislike to see people happy, unless their happiness is the work of our own hands." Charlotte looked at me, and smiled at the heat with which I spoke; and some tears which I perceived in the eyes

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of the young woman, inclined me to continue. "Wo unto those," I said, " who make use of their power over a human heart, to deprive it of the simple pleasure it would naturally enjoy. All the favours, all the attention in the world, cannot for a moment make amends for the loss of that happiness which a cruel tyranny destroys."

My heart was full; some recollections pressed upon my mind, and my eyes were filled with tears.

"We should say to ourselves every day," I exclaimed, "what good can I do to my friends? I can only endeavour not to interrupt

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them in their pleasures, and try to augment the happiness which I myself partake of. When their souls are tormented by a violent passion, when their hearts are rent with grief, I cannot give them relief for a moment.

" And when at length a fatal malady seizes the unhappy being, whose untimely grave was prepared by thy hand—when stretch'd out and exhausted, he raises his dim eyes to heaven, and the damps of death are on his brow—then thou standest before him like a condemned criminal; thou seest thy fault, but 'tis too late; thou feelest thy want of power; thou feelest, with bitterness, that all

thou

thou canst give, all thou canst do;
will not restore the strength of thy
unfortunate victim, nor procure for
him a moment of consolation!"

In pronouncing these words, the remembrance of a like scene, at which I had been present, came with all its weight upon my heart. I put my handkerchief to my eyes, I got up, and left the company. The voice of Charlotte, who called me to go home, made me recollect myself; and in our way back, with what tenderness she chid me! how kindly she presented to me, that the too eager interest, and the heat wsth which I entered into every thing

would wear me out, and shorten my days! — Yes, my angel, I will take care of myself; I will live for you.

LETTER XVI.

July 6.

CHARLOTTE is still with her dying friend; and is still the same, still the same kind attentive creature, who softens pain and gives happiness which ever way she turns. She went out yesterday with her little sisters: I knew it, and went to meet her, and we walked together. In coming back towards the town, we stopped at the spring I am so fond

fond of, and which is become a thousand times dearer to me now that Charlotte has sat by the side of it. I looked around me, and recalled the time I had passed there, when my heart was unoccupied and alone. "Dear spring," said I, "I have not since that time enjoyed cool repose by your fresh stream, and often passing hastily by, I have not even seen you." I fixed my eyes upon Charlotte, and was struck with a lively sense of all that I possess in her.

LETTER XVII.

July 8.

HOW can I be so childish? I depend on every turn and change of countenance. How can I be so childish?—We have been at Walheim: the ladies went in a carriage, but got out to walk. Whilst we were walking, I thought the eyes of Charlotte—but I was mistaken—However, I will tell you in two words, for I am now dying with sleep. When the ladies got into their coach again, young W. Selfstadt, Andran, and myself, were talking to them at the window; the

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young men were gay and full of spirits : I watched Charlotte's eyes ; they wandered from one to the other, but did not light on me ; upon me, who stood there motionless, and who saw nothing but her. My heart was bidding her adieu a thousand and a thousand times, and she did not even look at me. The coach drove off, and a tear was ready to start. I followed her with my eyes ; I saw her put her head out of the window. Alas ! was it for me that she looked out ? I know not ; and uncertainty is my comfort perhaps.—Good night.—I see my own weakness.

LET-

LETTER XVIII.

July 10.

YOU should see how foolish I look in company when her name is mentioned, when any body talks of her, particularly when they ask me how I like her? — How I *like* her! I detest the phrase. What must the man be who *liked* Charlotte, whose heart and senses were not totally captivated by her? — How I *like* her? — A little while ago I was asked how I *liked* Offian?

LET.

LETTER. XIX.

July 13.

NO, I am not mistaken—I read in her eyes that she is interested for me; I feel it. And I may believe my own heart, which tells me that she—dare I say it?—can I pronounce the divine words?—she loves me.

That she loves me! Oh! how the idea exalts me in my own eyes! How—I may tell you, for you are capable of understanding it—How I honour myself since I have been beloved by her! Is it presumption, or is it a consciousness of the truth?

I do not know a man who is capable of supplanting me in **the** heart of Charlotte — And yet when she speaks of Albert with warmth, with tenderness, I feel like an ambitious courtier, who is deprived of his honours and his titles ; or the soldier whose sword is taken from him by his prince.

LETTER XX.

July 16.

HOW my hearts beats, and my blood boils in my veins, when by accident I touch her finger ! — when my feet meet her's under the

table,

table, I draw them back with precipitation as from a furnace ; but a secret power again presses me forward, and disorders all my senses.

Her innocent and easy heart does not know that all these little marks of confidence and friendship make my torment. When she puts her hand upon mine, when in the eagerness of conversation she comes close to me, and her balmy breath reaches my lips, the sudden effect of lightning is not stronger. Ah ! this celestial confidence, if ever I should dare—you understand me my dear friend :—my heart is not so corrupt ;

it

it is weak, very weak ; and is not that a degree of corruption ?

I look upon her as sacred, and in her presence I desire nothing ; when I am near her, I am all soul. There is a favourite air of her's, which she plays on the harpsichord with the energy of an angel ; it is striking, touching, and yet simple. As soon as she begins it, care, sorrow, pain, all is forgotten. I believe I perfectly comprehend all that is related of the magic of ancient music. At times, when I am ready to shoot myself, she plays that air, and the darkness which hung over me is dispersed, and I breathe freely again.

LET-

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LETTER XXI.

July 18.

WHAT is the whole world to our hearts without love? It is the optic machine of the Savoyards without light. As soon as the little lamp appears, the figures shine on the whitened wall; and if love only shews us shadows which pass away, yet still we are happy, when, like children, we are transported with the splendid phantoms.

I shall not see Charlotte to-day; company which I could not avoid hinders me. What do you think I have done? I sent the little boy who

waits upon me, that I might at least see somebody that had been near her. With what impatience I waited for his return, and with what pleasure I saw him! I should certainly have taken him in my arms, if I had not been ashamed.

The Bologna stone, when placed in the sun, attracts the rays, and retains them so as to give light a considerable time after it is removed into the dark. The boy was just this to me. The idea that Charlotte's eyes had dwelt on his features, the buttons of his coat, the cap, made all of them so interesting, so dear to me—I would not at that

moment

moment have taken a thousand crowns for him! I was so happy to see him! Beware of laughing at me, my good friend: nothing which makes us happy is an illusion.

LETTER XXII.

July 19.

AS soon as I opened my window this morning, I said, "To day I shall see her;" and I calmly looked at the sun. I shall see her; and I have no other wish to form for the whole day; all, all is included in that thought.

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LETTER XXIII.

July 20.

I CANNOT yet approve the scheme you have of sending me to the ambassador of — at —. I don't love subordination; and we all know too, that he is a hard disagreeable man to have any connection with. You say my mother wishes to have me employed. I could not help laughing at that.—Am I not employed enough? and if it is in shelling peas and beans, it is in fact the same. In this world all is misery; and those who, in compliance with others, are endeavouring to acquire riches

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LETTER XXIV.

July 24.

SINCE you are so much interested about my progress in drawing, I am sorry to tell you that I have hitherto done very little in that way. I never was in a happier disposition; I never understood Nature better; I never was more sensible of the sublime parts of it, nor entered more minutely into its details: and yet I don't know how to express the state in which I am:

G 3

my

my executive powers fail me; every thing swims and dances before me, and I cannot make an outline. I think I should succeed better in relief, if I was to use clay or wax: I shall try, if this lasts any longer. Three times I have begun Charlotte's picture, and three times have dishonoured my pencil. I don't know how it is; not long ago I was very happy in taking likenesses: I have made a shadow of her; and I must content myself with that.

LET.

LETTER XXV.

July 27.

I HAVE very often resolved not to see her so often. It is more easy to talk than to act. Every day I yield to the temptation ; and when I return at night, I say I won't go on the morrow ; but on the morrow I find myself with her again, and don't know how it has happened. Don't imagine, however, that good reasons are always wanting. One evening she said, " You'll come again to-morrow : " I could not then avoid going. Another day, the weather is so fine I must walk.—I

walk to Walheim; when I am there, it is but half a league farther. My grandmother used to tell us a story of a mountain of loadstone: When any vessels came near it, the nails flew to the mountain, and the unhappy crew perished amidst the disjointed planks.

LETTER XXVI.

ALBERT is arrived. Were he the best and the most perfect of men, were I in every respect his inferior, it would not be less insupportable to me to see him in possession of so many charms, so

many

many perfections. I have seen him, my dear friend; I have seen this happy husband; he is a well bred worthy man, whom one cannot help liking. Happily for me, I was not at the first meeting; my heart would have been torn to pieces; and he has been so kind as not to give Charlotte a single kiss before me, Heaven reward him for it! The esteem he has for this charming girl must make me love him. He shows a regard for me; I am certainly indebted to Charlotte for it. Women always endeavour to keep up a good understanding between their friends: it don't often succeed: when it does,

G 5 they

they only are the gainers by it. Seriously, I cannot help esteeming Albert. The coolness and calmness of his temper form a striking contrast with the impetuosity of mine; and yet he has a great deal of feeling, and knows the value of that happiness which he possesses. He seems very little subject to ill humour, which, you know, of all faults is the one I am least inclined to excuse.

He looks upon me as a man of understanding and taste. My attachment to Charlotte, the lively interest I show for every thing that relates to her, augment his triumph and his love. I will not enquire whether

whether he may not in private sometimes tease her with little jealousies; in his place, at least, I know I should not be quite easy. Be that as it will, the pleasure I enjoyed with Charlotte is at an end. Shall I call it folly or blindness?—But it wants no name—the thing speaks itself. Before Albert came, I knew all that I now know; I knew I could have no pretensions to her, and I did not claim any; and now here I am, like an idiot, starting with astonishment, because another comes and takes her from me. I gnash my teeth, I bite my lips, I hate and despise myself; but I should

G 6 despise

despise the man still more who could tell me coldly, that I must reconcile myself to it, for it could not be otherwise. Let me escape from all such silly personages! — Yesterday, after having rambled a long time in the woods, I returned to Charlotte's house. I found her sitting with Albert under an arbour. Not knowing what to do, I played the fool, and was guilty of a thousand extravagancies. "For heaven's sake," said Charlotte to-day, "let me beg of you that we may have no more scenes like that of last night; you are quite alarming in your violent spirits." Between ourselves, I have

taken

taken care to watch Albert; and when he is engaged I run there, and am always pleased when I find her alone.

LETTER XXVII.

August 8.

BELIEVE me, my dear friend, when I talked of the people who might advise me to reconcile myself to this event, and said "Away with such advisers! I was very far from thinking you could possibly be one of them; but, in fact, you are in the right. I will only make one objection. Of two op-

posite

pofite methods which are proposed, one seldom takes either. There are as many various lines of conduct and opinion, as there are turns of feature between an aquiline nose and a flat one.

Give me leave, then, to grant all your conclusions, and contrive a middle way for myself to slip between them.

You say to me that I either have hopes of obtaining Charlotte, or that I have not. In the first case, I ought to follow my point, and press forward to the accomplishment of my wishes : In the second case, you tell me to act as a man, and throw aside

aside the unfortunate affection, which will consume my strength. This is very justly said, my dear friend, and very easy, too, to say.

Would you require of a feeble man, oppressed by a low and languid disease, which is wearing out his constitution by degrees, that he should put an end to his miseries by a pistol or dagger? Does not the same disease, which is consuming his life, at the same time deprive him of the resolution to put an end to it!

You might in return send me a simile of the same kind.—Who would not have an arm cut off, rather than risk his life by deferring
the

the operation? Perhaps many would.
—But let us leave these comparisons.

There are times in which I have resolution; and should perhaps go away, if I knew where to go.

LETTER XXVII.

August 10.

IF I were not deprived of all understanding, I might lead the happiest life in the world here: so many agreeable circumstances, and of a kind to make a worthy man happy, are seldom united. Alas! I feel it but too sensibly! happiness depends

depends solely on the mind! To be considered as making part of the most amiable family in the world, to be beloved by the father as a son, by the children as a father, and by Charlotte—and this worthy Albert, who does not interrupt my happiness by any stroke of ill humour, who salutes me cordially, and prefers me to every thing but Charlotte! My dear friend, you would like to hear us, when we walk together, and talk of Charlotte. In fact, nothing can be more ridiculous than our connection: and yet I am frequently softened, even to tears. When he talks to me of Charlotte's

most

most respectable mother; when he describes to me her last moments, and the affecting scene in which she gave up to her daughter the care of her children and family; when he tells me how Charlotte immediately assumed another character; what a skilful economist and an active housewife she became, and what a tender mother; every day displaying all these qualities, and yet preserving her agreeable cheerfulness and vivacity; I walk by the side of him, pick up flowers by the way, with great attention make a nosegay, and——throw it into the first brook I come to, and watch it as it

glides

glides gently down. I don't recollect whether I told you that Albert is to settle here. He is much esteemed at court, and has obtained a place which brings him in a good income. I have seen few men so punctual and methodical in business.

LETTER XXIX.

August 12.

ALBERT is certainly one of the best men in the world. I had a very singular conversation with him yesterday, which I must relate to you. I went to take leave of him; for I took it into my head to

spend

spend a few days in the mountains, from whence I now write to you. As I was walking up and down his room, I observed his pistols. I asked him to lend them to me for my journey. "They are at your service," said he, "if you will take the trouble of loading them, for I only keep them there for form." took one up; and he continued, "ever since I had like to have suffered for my precaution, I have left off keeping loaded fire arms." I desired him to tell me what the accident was. "I was with a friend in the country," he said; "my pistols were not loaded, and I slept with

with perfect tranquillity : but one rainy afternoon, when I was sitting and doing nothing, it came into my head, I don't know how, that the house might be attacked, and that these pistols might be of use, and that we might—in short, you know how one goes on when one has nothing better to do. I gave my pistols to my servant to clean and load. He was playing with the maid and trying to frighten her ; and, God knows how, the pistol went off : the rammer was in ; it went against the girl's hand, and tore off her thumb. You may imagine the lamentations and noise we had ; and

more—

moreover a surgeon's bill to pay. Since that accident, my pistols have remained as you see them. What, indeed, is the use of precaution? we cannot, my dear friend, foresee the dangers which threaten us." Do you know, I like every thing in this man, except his *indeeds*; and every rule has an exception. But he is so correct in his behaviour, of such perfect veracity, that if he thinks he has risked any thing, or been too general, or not strictly true, he never ceases to moderate, and qualify, and extenuate, till at length it appears that he has said nothing at all. Albert now, according to custom,

was

was immersed in his text : I ceased to hear him, and was lost in reveries. In these reveries, I put the mouth of the pistol to my forehead. "What do you mean?" cried Albert, turning back the pistol. "It is not charged," said I. "And if it is not," he answered with impatience, "what do you mean by it? I cannot comprehend how a man should be so mad as to blow out his brains; and the bare idea of it shocks me." "What right has any man" said I, "in speaking of an action, immediately to pronounce that he is mad or wise, or good or bad? What is meant by all this? Have you carefully

fully examined the inferior motives for the action? Have you fairly unfolded all the reasons which gave rise to it, and which made it necessary? If you did all this, you would not be so quick with your decision."

"However," said Albert, "you will allow that some actions are criminal, whatever were the motives for committing them."—I granted it, and shrugged up my shoulders.

"But still, my good friend," I said, "there are more exceptions to make. Theft is a crime: but the man who is driven to it by extreme poverty, with no design but to save himself and his family from perish-

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VOL.

ing for want, must he too be punished? and is he not rather an object of our compassion? Who shall throw the first stone at a husband that, in the first heat of just resentment, sacrifices a faithless wife and her perfidious seducer? or at a young girl whom love only has led astray? Even our laws, our pedantic laws, our cold, cruel laws, relent and withdraw their punishment."

" These examples are very different," said Albert; " because a man under the influence of violent passion is incapable of reflection, and is looked upon as drunk, or out of his senses." Oh! you people

of sound understandings," I replied, smiling, " are very ready to pronounce sentence, and talk of extravagance, and madness, and intoxication: you are quiet, and care for nothing; you avoid the drunken man, and detest the extravagant; you pass on the other side like the Priest, and like the Pharisee you thank God that you are not like one of them. I have more than once experienced the effects of drinking; my passions have always bordered upon extravagance, and I am not ashamed to own it. Do I not find that those superior men, who have done any great or extra-

ordinary

ordinary action, have in all times been treated as if they were intoxicated or mad?

And in private life, too, is it not insufferable, that if a young man does any thing uncommonly noble or generous, the world immediately says he is out of his sences? Take shame to yourselves, ye people of discretion! take shame to yourselves, ye fages of the earth!—“ This now is one of your extravagant flights,” said Albert; “ you always go beyond the mark; and here you are most undoubtedly wrong, to compare suicide, which is in question, with great actions; for it can only

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be looked upon as a weakness. It is much easier to die than to bear a life of misery with fortitude."

I was upon the point of breaking off the conversation immediately: for nothing puts me out of all patience like a common-place opinion which means nothing, whilst I am talking from my inmost heart. However, I got the better of myself: for having often heard this pitiful argument, I now begin to be used to it. But I answered with some warmth, " You call this a weakness; beware of being carried away by sounds! Suppose a people groaning under the yoke of tyranny; do

you

you call them weak, when at length they throw it off and break their chains! The man who, to rescue his house from the flames, exerts all his powers, lifts burdens with ease that he could scarcely move when his mind was at peace; he who attacks and puts to flight half a score of his enemies; are these weak people? My good friend, if resistance is a mark of strength, can the highest degree of resistance be called a weakness?" Albert looked steadfastly at me, and said, "Begging your pardon, I don't think the examples you have brought have any relation to the subject in question."

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"I ha-

" That may very likely be," I answered, " for I have been often told that my way of combining things appeared extravagant. But let us try to set the matter in another light; let us examine what is the situation of a man who resolves to free himself from the burden of life—a burden that is in general so much desired—and let us enter into his feelings; for we cannot otherwise reason fairly on the subject.

" Human nature," I continued, " has certain limits; there is a degree of joy, grief, pain, which it is able to endure, and beyond that degree it is annihilated.

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" We are not therefore to enquire whether a man is weak or strong, but whether he can pass the bounds of nature, and the measure of his sufferings either of mind or body ; and I think it as absurd to say that a man who destroys himself is a coward, as to call a man a coward who dies of a malignant fever." " Paradox, all paradox !" exclaimed Albert. " Not so paradoxical as you imagine," I replied : " you will allow that we call a disease mortal, in which nature is so severely attacked, and her strength so far exhausted, that what remains is not sufficient to raise her up, and set her a-going again.

" Let

“ Let us apply this to the mind ; let us see how ideas work, and how impressions fix upon it, till at length a violent passion takes entire possession, destroys all the powers it possessed when at ease, and entirely subdues it.

“ It is in vain that a man of sound understanding and cool temper sees the miserable situation of a wretch in such circumstances ; it is in vain that he counsels him : it is like the man in health, who sits by the bed of his dying friend, but is unable to communicate to him the smallest portion of his strength.”

Albert thought this too general.

I quoted

I quoted the girl who lately drowned herself, and made him recollect her story—"A good young creature, so accustomed to the narrow sphere of domestic labour, and the business of the week, that she knew of no pleasure but taking a walk in the fields on a Sunday, dancing once perhaps in the holidays, and the rest of her time only talking with her next neighbour of news, and the little quarrels of the village. At length her heart feels new and unknown wishes: all that used to please her, now by degrees becomes tasteless, till she meets with a man to whom a new affection invisibly attaches her; from that time

her

her hopes are all centered in him; the whole surrounding world is forgotten by her; she sees, hears, desires nothing but him; he alone occupies all her thoughts. Her heart having never felt the baleful pleasure arising from light vanity, her wishes tend immediately to the object of them: she hopes to belong to him, and in eternal bonds expects to enjoy all the desires of her heart, and to realize the ideas of happiness which she has formed. His repeated promises confirm her hopes; his fondness increases her passion; her whole soul is lost and drowned in pleasure; her heart is all rapture:

At

At length, she stretches out her arms
to embrace the object of her vows.
—All is vanished away ; her lover
forsakes her.—Amazed ! petrified !
she stands senseless before the abyss
of misery she sees before her : all
around is darkness ; for her there is
no prospect, nor hope, no consola-
tion : she is forsaken by him in
whom her life was bound up : and
in the wide universe which is be-
fore her, and among so many who
might repair her loss, she feels alone,
and abandoned by the whole world.
Thus blinded, thus impelled, by
the piercing grief which wrings her
heart, she plunges into the deep to

put

put an end to her torments. Such, Albert, is the history of many men; And is it not a parallel case with illness? Nature has no way to escape: her powers exhausted, and contending powers to struggle with, death must be the consequence. Woe unto the man who could hear this situation described, and who could say, "A foolish girl! why did not she wait till time had worn off the impression? her despair would have been softened, and she would have found another lover to comfort her." One might as well say, "A fool! he died of a fever: why did not he wait till he had recovered his

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strength, till his blood was calm? then all would have been well, and he would have been alive now.

Albert, who did not allow the comparison to be just, made many objections: among the rest, that I had only brought the example of a simple and ignorant girl;—but he could not comprehend how a man of sense, whose views are more enlarged, and who sees such various consolations, should ever suffer himself to fall into such a state of despair. “ My good friend,” said I, “ whatever is the education of a man, whatever is his understanding, still he is a man; and the little rea-

son that he possesses, either does not act at all, or acts very feebly, when the passions are let loose, or rather when the boundaries of human nature close in upon him—But we will talk of this another time,” I said, and took up my hat—Alas! my heart was full—and we parted without conviction on either side.—How rarely do men understand one another!

LET.

LETTER XXX.

August 15.

IT is most certain that what renders one man necessary to another, is a similarity of taste and sentiment. I see that Charlotte would not lose me without regret ; and as to the children, they every day ask me to come again on the morrow. I went this afternoon to tune Charlotte's harpsichord : but I could not contrive to do it ; all the children came about me, and asked me to tell them a story. Charlotte was desirous that I should please them ; and I told my very best tale of the prince that

I 2 was

was served by dwarfs. I improve by this exercise myself, I assure you, and am quite surprised at the impression these stories make upon the children. If I invent an incident at any time, and afterwards omit it, the little arch rogues never fail to tell me it was so the first time ; so that I now endeavour to relate with great exactness, and without any pauses, and in a tone of voice that is almost recitative. I see by this how much an author hurts his works, by altering them even for the better. The first impression is readily received. A man will believe the incredible, it will be engraved

on his memory ; and woe unto those who would afterwards endeavour to efface it !

LETTER XXXI.

WHAT constitutes the happiness of man ? is it then change and becoming, the source of his misery ? — a distant sentiment which animated my heart with the love of nature, which poured in upon me a torrent of delight, which brought all paradise before me, is now become an insupportable torment, a demon which pursues and

harasses me incessantly. In times past I contemplated from the top of high rocks, the broad river which, far as eye can reach, waters this fertile plain. Every thing put forth and grew, and was expanded. Around me was all in motion. I saw these mountains covered to their summits with high and tufted trees, and the vallies in their various windings sheltered by smiling woods; the peaceful streams gently glided through the trembling reeds, and in its calm surface reflected the light clouds, which a soft zephyr kept suspended in the air. I heard the birds animating the woods with their

their song. Millions of insects danced in the purple rays of the sun. The arid rock afforded nourishment to the moss; and the sands below were covered with broom. The vivifying heat which animates all nature, was every where displayed before my eyes; is filled and warmed my heart. I was lost in the idea of infinity. Stupendous mountains encompassed me; precipices were before my feet; torrents fell by the side of me; impetuous rivers ran through the plain; rocks and mountains resounded from afar: and in the depths of the earth I saw innumerable powers in motion, and mul-

tiplying to infinity. All the beings of the creation, of a thousand tribes and a thousand forms, move upon the earth and in the air; and man hides himself in his little hut, and says, "I am lord over this vast universe." Weak mortal! all things appear little to you, for you are little yourself. Craggy mountains, deserts untrodden by the foot of man, even the unknown confines of the immense ocean, are animated by the breath of the Eternal: and every atom to which he has given existence and life, finds favour in his sight. Ah! how often at that time has the flight of a sea-bird,

which

which passed over my head, inspired me with the design of being transported to the shore of the immeasurable waters, there to drink the pleasures of life as in a river, and to partake, if but for a moment, and with the confined powers of my soul, of the beatitude of the Creator, in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

My dear friend, the bare recollection of these times still gives me pleasure: the vehemence of mind with which I recall the sensations, which gives me faculties to express them, raises me above myself, and

makes me doubly feel my present anguish.

The curtain drops, the scene is changed ; instead of prospects of eternal life, a bottomless pit is for ever opened before me. Can we say of any thing that it exists, when all pales away ; when time in its rapid progres carries every thing with it ; and our transitory existence, hurried along by the torrent, is either swallowed up by the waves or dashed against the rocks ? There is not a moment which does not prey upon me, and ail around me ; and every moment I am myself a destroyer. The most innocent walk deprives

of life thousands of poor insects, one step destroys the fabric of the industrious ant, and turns a little world into a chaos! No, 'tis not the great and uncommon calamities of the world, the floods which sweep away whole villages, the earthquakes that swallow up our towns, which touch and affect me. What saps my heart is that destroying, hidden power, which exists in every thing. Nature has formed nothing which does not consume itself, and every thing that is near it: so that, surrounded by earth and air, and by all the active powers, I wander with an aching heart; and the universe

to me is as a fearful monster, which devours and regorges its food.

LETTER XXXII.

August 20.

IT is vain that I stretch out my arms to her, when I awake in the morning after the ill-omened visions of the night; 'tis in vain that I seek her, when an innocent dream has happily deceived me, and placed me by her side in the fields: I held her hand; I covered it with kisses: Alas! when half asleep, I still think I touch her; and then I awake entirely—torrents of

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tears flow from my oppressed heart !
and, bereaved of all comfort, I weep
over the woes to come.

LETTER XXXIII.

August 22.

MY active spirits have degenerated into uneasy indolence : —I cannot employ myself ; I cannot be idle. I cannot think ; I am no longer sensible of the beauties of nature, and books are distasteful to me.—When we give ourselves up, every thing fails us.—I wish sometimes I was a mechanic : when I waked in the morning, I should have

some

some pursuit, some hope, a task at least for a day. I often envy Albert when I see him buried in a heap of papers and parchments up to his eyes; and I say to myself, in his place I should be happy.—I have more than once intended to write to you, and to the minister, for the employment which you think I might obtain. I believe myself I might have it: the minister has long shown a regard for me, and has often told me that I ought to seek some employment. It is the business of an hour only: But when the fable recurs to me of the horse, who, being weary of his liberty,

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suffered himself to be saddled and bridled, and then found reason to repent ; I say, when this fable occurs to me, I don't know what to determine upon.—Besides, my dear friend, this desire to change my situation, is it not the consequence of that restless, perturbed spirit, which would equally pursue me in every situation in life ?

LETTER XXXIV.

August 28.

IF my ills could admit of any cure, they would certainly be cured here.

here.—This is my birth-day—Very early in the morning, I received a little parcel from Albert: Upon opening it, I found one of the knots which Charlotte had on her sleeve the first time I saw her, and which I had several times asked her to give me. Albert had added two volumes, in 12mo, of Wetstein's Homer, which I had wanted for some time, the Ernesti edition being inconvenient to carry with me when I walked out. You see how they prevent my wishes, how well they understand all those little attentions of friendship, so superior to the magnificent presents of the great, which

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are humiliating. I kissed the sleeve-knot a thousand times, and every time I breathed delight from the memory of happy days---days which will never return. Such, my friend, is our fate. I do not murmur at it.

—The flowers of life do but just show themselves---How many pass away, and leave no trace behind ! how few are succeeded by fruit, and the fruit how rarely does it ripen !

—Alas ! is it not strange, my dear friend, that we should suffer to perish and to decay the little which remains and ripens ? — Adieu.

It is the finest weather in the world.—In Charlotte's orchard I often

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It is the finest weather in the world.—In Charlotte's orchard I of-

ten

ten climb into a tree, and choose pears for her; she stands under it, and takes them from me as I gather them.

LETTER XXXV.

August 30.

WRETCH that I am, do I not take pleasure in deceiving myself, and am I not without understanding? — What will become of this ardent and unbounded passion? — I address no prayers but to Charlotte; my imagination sees nothing but her; all that surrounds me is of no account, but as it relates to her.

her.—And in this state I enjoy some happy hours, till I am obliged to tear myself from her; and to that, alas! my heart often forces me. When I have been sitting by her for two or three hours, quite absorbed by her figure, her attitudes, her divine expressions, the sentiment by degrees takes possession of me, and is worked up to the highest excess: my sight is confused; my breathing is oppressed; I hear nothing; my veins swell; a palpitation seizes my heart; and I scarcely know where I am, or whether I exist: Then, if soft sensations do not prevail, as it sometimes happens,—if Charlotte

does

does not at least allow me the melancholy consolation to bathe her hand with my tears, I am obliged to leave her, and run and wander about the country. I climb steep rocks; I break my way through copses, amongst thorns and briers, which tear me to pieces, and I feel a little relief. Sometimes I lie stretch'd on the ground, overcome with fatigue, and dying with thirst: sometimes, late in the night, when the moon shines upon my head, I lean against a bending tree in some sequester'd forest, to ease my wrung feet; and, quite worn out and exhausted, I sleep till break of day.

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Oh, my friend! the dismal cell, the sackcloth, the girdle, with sharp points of iron, would be indulgence and luxury in comparison of what I now suffer.—Adieu.—I see no end to these torments but the grave.

LETTER XXXVI.

September 3.

I WILL go.—My dear friend, I thank you; I was in doubt, and you determine me.—I have resolved to leave her this fortnight;—it must be so.—She is returned to the town, and is at the house of a friend; and Albert—and—I will go from hence.

LET.

LETTER XXXVII.

September 3.

WHAT a night? I can henceforth bear any thing. My friend, I shall see her no more. Ah! why cannot I fall on your neck, and with floods of tears express all the passions which tear my heart! I am sitting down, and trying to breathe freely, and doing all that is in my power to compose my mind!—I am waiting for day-light and the post-horses. Charlotte is at rest; she does not know that she will see me no more. I tore myself away; and had the resolution not to betray my intention,

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intention, during a conversation
which lasted two hours.—Great
God ! such a conversation?

Albert promised me to come with
Charlotte into the garden immedi-
ately after supper. I was upon the
terrace, under the thick chefnut-
trees, and saw the setting sun ; my
eyes for the last time saw him sink
beneath this delightful valley and
silent stream. I had often been up-
on the same spot with Charlotte, and
seen the same glorious sight ; and
now—I walked up and down this
walk, so dear to me ; a secret sym-
pathy had often detained me there
before I knew Charlotte ; and we
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were pleased when, early in our acquaintance, we found we had both had the same predilection for this place. Under the chefnut-trees there is an extensive view.—But I remember that I mentioned this to you before in a letter, and described how high copses inclose the end of it; how the walk through the wood becomes darker and darker, till it ends in a recess, formed by the thickest trees, and which has all the charms of gloomy solitude. I still remember the tender melancholy, which came over my heart the first time I entered this silent deep retreat. I had certainly a secret foreboding that it

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would one day be the scene of my happiness and of my torment.

After I had spent half an hour in the opposite ideas of going away and returning again, I heard them come up the terrace. I flew to meet them; and, shuddering, I took Charlotte's hand and kissed it. Just as we reached the top of the terrace, the moon appeared behind a hill covered with wood. Conversing on various subjects, we came to the dark recess: Charlotte went in and sat down: Albert sat down by her side; I did the same.—But my agitation did not suffer me to remain long seated; I got up and stood be-

fore her, walked backwards and forward, sat down again:—it was a state of violent emotions.

Charlotte made us observe a fine effect of moon-light at the end of the wood, which appeared the more striking and brilliant from the darkness which surrounded the spot where we were. We remained for some time silent; and then Charlotte said, “ Whenever I walk by moon-light, it brings to my remembrance all those who were dear to me, and who are no more; and I think of death and a future state.—Yes,” continues she, with a firm but touching voice, “ we shall still

exist;

exist; but, Werter, shall we find one another out? shall we know one another again? What presages have you? What is your opinion?"

"Charlotte," I said, holding out my hand to her, and my eyes full of tears, "we shall again see one another here and hereafter." I could say no more—My dear friend, should she have put this question to me just when the thoughts of a cruel separation filled my heart?

"And those persons who have been dear to us," said she, "and who are now no more, do they know, that, when we are happy, we

recall them to our memory with tenderness?—The shade of my mother hovers round me, when in a still evening I sit in the midst of her children—when I see them assembled about me as they used to be assembled about her! I then raise my swimming eyes to heaven, and wish she could look down upon us, and see that I fulfil the promise which I made to her in her last moments, to be a mother to her children! A hundred times I have exclaimed, Pardon, dearest of mothers! pardon me if I am not to them all that you were!—Alas! I do all that I can: they are properly clothed

clothed and fed: and still more, they are well educated and beloved! If you could behold our mutual attachment, the harmony that subsists amongst us, you would give thanks to that Being to whom, dying, you addressed such fervent prayers for our happiness." This she said, my dear friend; but who could repeat all her words? how should cold unfeeling characters catch the expressions of sentiment and genius? Albert gently interrupted her—"My charming Charlotte! you are too much affected: I know these recollections are dear to you; but I beg—" "Oh Albert,"

said she, "you do not forget, I know you do not, the evenings when we three, during the absence of my father, used to sit at our little round table after the children were gone to bed. You often had a book in your hand, but you seldom read any of it—and who would not have preferred the conversation of that delightful woman to every thing in the world? She was beautiful, mild, cheerful, and always active, God knows how often I have knelt before him, and prayed that I might be like her."

I threw myself at her feet; I took her hands, and wetting them with my

my tears, said, "Charlotte! Charlotte the benediction of Heaven is upon you, and the spirit of your mother."—"If you had but known her," she said, and pressed my hand,—"she was worthy of being known to you."—I was motionless; never had I received praise so flattering. "And this woman was to die in the flower of her age; the youngest of her children was but six months old. Her illness was short; she was resigned and calm; nothing gave her any anxiety but her children, and more particularly the youngest. When she found her end approaching she bade me go and fetch them;

them; and when they were all around her bed, the little ones who did not know their misfortune, and the great ones who were quite overcome with sorrow, she raised her feeble hands to Heaven, hung over them, and prayed for them; then kissed them one after the other, sent them back, and said to me, "Be you their mother." I held out my hand to her. "You promise much, my child: a mother's fondness and a mother's care. Your tears of affection and gratitude have often shown me that you felt what was a mother's tenderness—show such tenderness to your brothers and sisters: and to

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your father be dutiful and faithful as a wife: you will be his comfort." She asked for him. He was gone out to hide the bitterness of his grief; he felt all that he was to lose; and his heart was in agonies.

" You, Albert, were in the room. She heard somebody move; asked who it was, and desired you to come to her. She looked at us both with great composure and satisfaction in her countenance, and said, " They will be happy, they will be happy with one another!"—Albert taking her in his arms, cried out, " Yes, Charlotte, we are and shall be happy." Even the calm Albert was moved:

moved:—I was quite out of my sences.

“ And such a woman,” she continued, “ was to leave us, Werter!

—Great God! must we thus part with every thing we hold dear in the world? Nobody feels this more keenly than children; they cried and lamented for a long time afterwards, that black men had carried away their dear mamma!”

Charlotte got up:—it rouzed me—but I remained sitting, and held her hand. “ Let us go,” said she “ it is quite time.” She drew away her hand; I grasped it still closer. “ We shall see one another again,”

I said;

I said ; “ we shall find one another out ; under whatever form it is, we shall know one another. I am going; yes, I am going of my own accord; but if it was for ever, it would be more than I could bear. Adieu, Charlotte ! Adieu, Albert ! we shall see one another again.”—

“ Yes, to morrow, I fancy,” she added, smiling. I felt the word *to morrow*. Alas ! she scarcely knew when she withdrew her hand from me — She went down the walk ; I stood and followed her with my eyes ; then threw myself on the ground in a passion of tears : I got up again, and ran up to the terrace ;

and

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and there I still saw, under the shade of the lime-trees, her white gown waving near the garden-gate. I stretched out my arms; and she disappeared!

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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